Table of Contents

1. chapter 1 ALEX
2. Chapter 2 MARCUS
3. Note

chapter 1 ALEX

OFFICIAL TEASER

Chapter 1

~Alex~

The ground crunched under my paws as I swiftly made my way through the lush green forest, as it was nearing the end of fall. My thoughts would often move to my parents and the love I had for them, but also the unfortunate fact of losing my bag in a panic a year back, so I had no reminder of them, plus barely any memories of their looks. The details seemed to fade over time.

My stomach rumbled, and I knew raw meat wouldn't cut it. Having no money or a place to stay didn't matter, as the five-finger discount served me well. I felt my panther's unease; it was like a feeling or instinct, but I like to think that, if the sense had a name, it would be Cleo. Similar to having a wolf's instinct: both guide and protect Shifters. We could turn into what we had as our spirit animal, so for me, I could turn into a panther.

I began focusing on my surroundings; nothing stood out, as it was another scenic patch of woods. My stomach rumbled, reminding me that I needed food. Finding somewhere to get some human food is next on my to-do list. I've only had what I could kill in the forest, and human food was becoming rare for me to indulge in.

Deciding to find a small store somewhere, I started looking for a road to lead me in the right direction. My instinct told me to be careful of this land. Each land had an alpha to rule its territory, which separated at some point; then everyone in the pack, which held communities of people, would follow their leader. Unclaimed land has no connection to anything or any species, and rogue lands are home to unwanted wolves or loose ends, as my uncle used to call them, but I couldn't tell

whether this was a territory, unclaimed land, or a rogue land.

My uncle was another story.

He was my abuser, my tormentor, and the reason I haven't stopped running since I was 18. He came from a wealthy family looking to overtake the multipack system; I don't know much, but I overheard things from my room when my uncle would have his friends over. They would play cards, drink, and demand that I cook them food. He always said anyone would love my panther's head hanging on their wall, and I believed him.

I hadn't seen another one of my kind in my life. My parent figure was mainly my mom, who I assume was a wolf, though I'd never seen her shift. I saw my dad shift once, but I don't remember what he looked like. One day, my dad came home throwing up, and that's the last memory I had...he died a day later; my mother then stopped eating and died shortly after him as a result of heartbreak; this is something that happens to soul mates. I'm not exactly sure about the whole story with my parents, considering I only had them for a few years before I went into government care; I have barely any memories of them. Honestly, most of my memories were filled in by my uncle after he adopted me a few months after I landed in the foster system.

Once I found a road, I shifted back into human form, my claws retracted, and my bones snapped back into place. The only fortunate thing about being a panther was that I could turn back into human form in my clothes afterward. I never knew why. wolves would bust their clothes while shifting into their wolf spirit, so they came back naked.

I wasn't jealous of that.

The road led me to a small-looking town. I ignored the details, considering it was an in-and-out situation, not trying to stay long or draw attention. The first store I recognized was a quacky mart, so I brushed off the same outfit I'd worn for the past few months to not seem out of place; clothing was always

the bare minimum with me, always stolen when one of my garments was worn out. Currently, my get-up was black leggings, a faded blue hoodie, old socks, and some beat-up tennis shoes. Walking inside, the lights threw me off instantly; I wasn't used to artificial lighting, but I continued forward so as not to look suspicious. The cashier glanced over, not seeming to care. Before she looked away, I reminded myself to stay calm as I moved forward.

Then, something shiny caught my attention…A mirror.

Now, I hadn't looked at myself in years because I had been in panther form off and on since getting away from my abuser. Looking, I stared back at myself. Long black hair cascaded down my shoulders, wide blue eyes, my face thin from barely eating, and the scarring that ran all over my body, slightly poking out from under my hoodie, courtesy of the monster that was my uncle. The bags under my eyes really drew my attention as I looked like the ghost version of me.

I sighed, moving on as I didn't like the reminder.

Nothing in the store was too hard to find, so it took practically no time to get what I needed. On my way to the ready-meal fridge section, where I could find cooked foods like mac and cheese, mashed potatoes, and other premade ready-to-eat meals, I found myself getting lost in how many items small stores now sell. I stuffed two meals into my hoodie pocket, not caring what they were, and headed swiftly for the exit. The rule was to take as little as possible and make no eye contact.

Following you. My instinct roared in my mind.

Warriors.

I could smell not just one, but more, outside the store…Well, at least I knew I was in pack territory. Continuing to the door, I tried to act unsuspecting, but given that most of the world was werewolves and could smell that I was a stranger, I doubted it would work. Humans were rare, as most lived in small, tight-knit communities.

Here goes nothing.

My legs carried me past the clerk, watching all of this happen with wide eyes, but I avoided getting involved and made it past the door into the parking lot. They were closer than i thought as I was tackled by a blond boy who cut off my line of escape. "Rogue," he spat, pressing my face into the concrete. He held my hands behind my back as I wiggled, trying to get out, but it was a tad hard with no free hands.

"I'm human," I gritted before I could think. My stomach dropped as the statement sank in: these Wolves would believe I'm human, but I don't know if it's worse to say I'm a panther shifter.

"You still have to see our Alpha; come with me," he stated.

Pathetic.

I rolled over, kneeing him in the groin. He fell directly to the ground, and I took off for my life, slipping past them as the other two checked on the warrior in pain, but quickly followed me while the other made his way to his feet. "Fucking hell," he groaned; I was followed by two sets of footsteps, meaning I didn't know where the third guy was. It was not a brilliant move, kicking most likely a pack warrior in the junk, but if I live to tell the tale, it'll be pretty cool, yet I knew that I was no match for two warriors, let alone three.

My body was sweating, and I was trying to think of how to get back to the woods to shift and get out of there. The footsteps were getting louder behind me, and my legs started to hurt from running on them; my panther's legs could carry me anywhere, but I'd not been in human form in a while.

Crossing a street, then running to the edge of the forest, I looked around me, needing a way to get out of this. I heard that seeing a high authority could be either a death sentence or that you live the rest of your life in chains; at least, that's what I have heard, though I haven't met an official full-blood first-in-command. "Josh, block her other side!" the man with short, red

hair yelled. A massive wolf jumped in my way, growling straight into my face. His fur was chestnut, he had strong legs, light hazel eyes, and huge paws.

He blocked my way, swaying and dodging, keeping me trapped before stepping forward, causing me to scamper back in fear. I wasn't a baby; I was just new to most immortal creatures, as I never really grew up with many of them, either in foster care or at my uncles'.

"Stand down, or we will kill you," I hear a masculine voice say, followed by, "Tyler, keep her blocked off. Miles, get the van ready to bring her."

Ah, shit.

"I was only getting food; I'll put it back and be on my way," I lied.

"No, I can't do that. We have to get you back; then it will be decided what happens from there," the man said, followed by the sandy-haired wolf growling and then morphing back into his human state.

naked.

A blue van pulled up, and I was still looking around for exits. Shifting entered my mind, but I squashed it as I remembered I had told them I was human. The naked boy in front of me and the others watched my every move, all acting nonchalantly about all of this. I covered my eyes from his now-showing genitals, "and you guys can just let me go; I won't tell anyone, and no one has to know I was here. Can you please put on a shirt or something?"

The naked man chuckled.

"Whatever makes you feel better, sweetheart." It sounded as if his friend handed him a shirt from the van's passenger side as a sound rang out, and the man slipped it on along with some jeans, but I was still covering my eyes. I'd heard that Nudity

didn't affect wolves because they grew up practically naked around each other. Again, that's another thing I'd heard from my uncle.

Uncovering my eyes, the blond boy smiled. At this point, I was telling these people apart by hair color. My nerves shot at the sight of the rusted blue van now waiting for me to go to a possible, unknown death. The dark-haired man spoke next "Get her in the car."

My ears rang; it was like an out-of-body experience because, without a thought, I swung my fist toward the closest person I could reach; the other boys seemed to call him Tyler. My elbow landed across the side of his face before I was pinned down on the grass, and a rag was forced over my mouth.

"Breathe in, asshole," someone growled.

I fought for as long as I could before whatever they had soaked the rag in began to take effect; it seemed strong, as my head sagged, and all I could comprehend was Darkness.
.
.
.
My eyes fluttered open, and my vision became clear almost immediately. For once, I mentally thanked my genetics. Unfortunately, the surroundings I woke up to were a bleak dungeon of some kind; it looked like a remodeled basement. My head pounded, the ground was cold, and I feared the worst. Nothing this bad had happened since my uncle came into my life.

Waiting for someone to seal my fate felt like an eternity, and it was freezing, which I assumed was on purpose, considering it was the beginning of fall.

Looking around, it didn't look like there was anyone else in any of the other cells parallel to the iron door decorating the wall. I moved my neck, and it made me realize I had a metal collar on, with chains connecting to the wall, coaxed into rough concrete. The silence was deafening. You could hear a

pin drop, but all shifters had great hearing; at the top of that list were wolves.

There were cold floors and metal bars, probably laced with silver. It was like I was put in a human cell, as the metal didn't burn. My hands grasped the chain. I had never been in this situation, so I didn't know what would happen.

This was perhaps the closest I had been to possible death since my uncle. I didn't know what this person would do with me, having never met anyone who called themselves royalty.

Maybe he will make me work for him for the rest of my life. At least then I would be eating well, I thought to myself. As I have heard, packs sometimes turn trespassers into maids or laborers of the pack. That wouldn't sound too bad if most of them weren't run ragged, but it would give me an opportunity to escape, too, but it's not likely.

My mind wandered to what life was like in a community like this, not knowing exactly what happened here. I'd imagined a clean home with both parents, along with all the food and hot showers you could ask for—a nice little dream. My head pounded from a lack of food or water.

Footsteps shook me out of my delusions, making the blood drain from my face. "A rogue human, sex female, intentions are unknown, and she is a fighter," someone reported…It had to have been one of the three who brought me here, given how formal the speech was. Everything looked bleak for me, but I'd know after today, or I'd be dead.

"Good, you are now unneeded; the alpha would like you three to do a patrol tonight," an unfamiliar voice said. The same responses followed three times.

"Yes, beta."
"Yes, beta."
"Yes, beta."

I still haven't looked up, not wanting to piss anyone off, nor

would I want to piss off a high-ranking wolf. More footsteps followed, and my face shot up to see a tall man coming directly at my cell; my nerves spiked as I slid back up against the wall in fear; my chains clanging against the wall.

He stopped outside, staring down at me. His brown hair with blonde highlights brushed his forehead, accentuating his face. Then his brown eyes captured mine as he crossed his arms in an authoritative stance; he looked to think for a moment. "What's your name?" he asked. Looking apathetic to my fear, as silence followed, he sighed, "Are you from a pack?"

"What's going to happen to me?" I whispered, instantly regretting speaking freely.

"I'm going to take you to my superior, and he will figure out what to do from there. I am Beta Kyle of the power pack; you are trespassing. What is the nature of your arrival?" he asked, still staring down at me.

I stared up at him, fresh from waking up in a cell. "It was an accident-." I started to say.

He cut me off. "Besides that, you stole from a shop on our land; that was no accident."

He got me there.

"I'm poor and get confused easily, so if you let me go, I won't be any more trouble," I pleaded, trying to sit up but failing as there must have been more of whatever they used on me in my system.

"No, I can't do that; we know you're here, so do you wanna do this the easy way or the hard way?" He gave me the option, like I wanted to try and fight a high-ranking wolf and fail. I thought about it for a second, scanning the enclosed steel door.

I would have to make it calmly past that and hope there was an exit.

I rolled to my knees and, unsteadily, made it to my feet, hands

clanking from the metal banging against itself. I shook my chains to signify I couldn't go with him without them removed. "Yes, those," he commented before walking close to me and swiftly unlatching the back of the collar, freeing me. Without hesitation, he backed up, giving me little space. "How would you like this to go?" He asked.

I'd rather not go anywhere with him.

"I'll walk," I stated.

He grabbed my arm with a tight grip. "Just in case," he sneered, dragging me toward the door with my anxiety spiking with every step. Once we got to the exit, I looked past the door; the stairs led to another. "Be careful," he cautioned, seeming to switch between a nice guy and, well... royalty. I nodded in acknowledgment.

A pack warrior met us at the door to the stairs. The two men didn't speak but seemed to know what was happening as he unlocked the door and stepped aside for us to continue. We went up the stairs to the door, which led to a room that looked like a living room, with a small kitchen looking into it.

now or never.

I ripped myself out of his grip, turning a corner. "I got it!" A high-pitched voice rang behind me before I was grabbed by the bottom of my pants and tripped, rolling back against a wall. A long-haired, red-headed person slung themselves at me, holding my wrists, and pinned me down. I hated lycan strength. "Situation controlled." She grinned over to Beta Boy, then looked down, allowing me to see the features of her face. She was a curly red-haired female, looking in her 20s, with a heart-shaped face, brown eyes, full lips, and light freckles. She could have been a model if she wanted to.

The two of them acted accustomed to each other, but I didn't know how anything around here worked. My instincts roared to life as the male grabbed me.

"Thank you, love," he responded before forcefully swinging me to my feet after seemingly ensuring the female got to hers. "Behave, and maybe he will be easy on you. You are on my last nerve."

I swallowed. Great, I pissed off the second-in-command.

The female followed us. They wouldn't let the same slip-up happen again, so now I have to hope I live. My mind thought of things that this man in charge would do to me.

No way out now.

Once we turned and headed up some stairs to what I'm assuming was the door to someone's office, the two shared a look, and the female held tighter onto me. At the same time, the beta opened the door, and I was pushed into a room with the door swinging shut behind me.

"My beta wolves guard that door," a masculine voice stated, and the most delectable smell wafted to my nose, rousing my beast. Finally, I looked over and saw a brown-haired man sitting at a desk, his elbows propped on it, a sheet of paper beneath. He did not bother to look up at me; It was like he was bored. I didn't speak because I didn't want to die. He looked up after the silence that followed his statement, his deep brown eyes staring into mine.

I was frozen with fear.

"Speak, what are you doing on my land?" he growled. My mouth shot open, but no words came out. "Do you disrespect me by not responding? Do you think that makes you brave?! Plus, stealing from my pack. I could kill you just for that." he was handsome in a normal case, but right now, he looked like he would kill me, his hands fidgeting on his desk, balled into fists.

I weighed my options again, knowing that if I attempted to run, the two who brought me up here would catch me, and I'd be toast for sure. Even if I got past them, there was no

guarantee that warriors weren't out protecting their grounds.

He got up from his desk, stalking closer to me. "I'm human; I stole because I'm poor," I rambled, not wanting him any closer to me.

"See, I'm not buying that. I've never seen you anywhere in our pack or neighboring packs," he kept getting closer. "Now tell me why you're here!"

"I-i. It was a mistake," I rambled.

"Your kind are mistakes," he growled, herding me with his body. As he moved forward, I moved back, heading backward deeper into his domain. His eyes never left mine. "Now, why are you here?" he said sternly, continuing to move slowly, watching me.

My body began to tremble; I was scared and hadn't spoken to many people in the past. "I needed food, and I came here." It was partly true, but I wasn't being given any stars for honesty.

"You have resources, which is why I'm not buying that," he scoffed, stopping where he was.

The position I was in wasn't good, as he was now blocking my exit; the only other way out was the window. "What would you like me to say?" I whispered, knowing he could hear me.

"The truth," he stated, scowling down at me.

I didn't say anything, not knowing the response he wanted.

After two minutes of silence, followed by a vast blur and a hand wrapping around my arm, my ears started ringing, and my heart sped up in panic as my nerves spiked with his sharp grasp. I tried bringing my hands up to get this man off of me, but I was no match for his strength, so this was it; I was going to die. My whole body tensed as I kept focusing on his eyes, going from brown to deep blue. I might be delirious, but he looked as if he recognized me.

Suddenly, he let me go, my arm throbbing from his grasp. All I could do was slide down the wall to his feet. I rocked back and forth trying to calm myself, and waited for the final blow, but it never came.

"Mate," he stated. I struggled to get as much oxygen as possible while he stared at me like he couldn't believe the word had escaped his lips. I was trying to regain my composure after his grasp and the quickness of everything going on around me. He kneeled beside me, "fuck" he cursed under his breath. He touched my hand, and it felt like lightning or, as some would call it, sparks going across my skin.

I purred.

A reaction I have never had to a person.

Flinging my hand out of his, I put my head in my knees, trying not to hyperventilate from fear. Concern registered in his eyes as he looked down at me. Snapping out of it, he looked to take something out of his pocket, but I couldn't hear his mouth move from the ringing in my ears. My head was pounding from everything, but I was too scared to escape, so I lay there weak and let the cold floor cradle me as I tried not to panic.

There was truly no calm.

Chapter 2 MARCUS

CHAPTER 2
~Marcus~
earlier

I growled.

Standing in front of the unmated females from some of my neighboring packs, I sighed. The women stood in a line staring back at me, so I started at the end and made my way down, skimming my hand across each female's hand—nothing. This was my luck—I never found her, but I felt like I was missing her.

The small room was quaint, as it housed a long oak desk with a black leather office chair plus a few foldable chairs lining the wall for visitors; paintings lined the walls along with a window behind the office desk, which looked into the deep wilderness surrounding our pack house, along with a memorial of my parents.

They ruled with an iron fist; loved by all and severely mourned when they passed from an attack on our family. I was their only son; between Beth and me, she didn't want to rule, and I was training my whole life for it. I always wondered if my parents knew I'd become my people's leader, because I had no recollection of Beth learning the things I did; instead, she learned different skills, such as how to patrol the grounds or where all the points of the land came together. My parents and my cousin Jace have taught me all I needed to know, plus some.

My cousin Jace raised me when my parents passed, and I looked up to him as a leader. Beth started her private studies, taking runs and getting to know everyone. She informed me of what was happening around the pack when I came up in rank. She earned her title as my beta female, meaning she would be one of my go-to people and warriors.

My arm twitched in anger; None of the faces before me were mine.

Most shifters have what we call a mate, or, in other words, the person you are meant to be with for the rest of your life; you have to have skin-to-skin contact, and then you pick up on their scent. Mates are particular, hand-picked by one of our gods, Selene, also known as the moon goddess. It had been years since I reached the age of finding my mate, and I was slowly running out of hope that I would find them and that my people wouldn't have a Luna or the other leader of a group of people.

Selene was also the reason wolves shift; she gave us this to defend ourselves. Rumor was that Hecate, another sister, created vampires in an attempt to develop a different race, even though Selene had already perfected wolves. Artemis, the third sister, is said to follow, producing a slew of other kinds of beings.

"Marcus, I need you to calm down; you're scaring the ladies," Kyle said, interrupting my thoughts. Kyle is my beta. We were like brothers since the day we met. He is exactly like my beta female: someone whom I can go to and, if I get sick or injured, can lead. Kyle and I met at my parents' funeral. He offered me candy and was confident I couldn't beat him at basketball.

Once my parents died, Jace helped raise me and my adopted sister Beth, Kyle's mate. Beth was one year younger than Kyle, as he found out she was his when he turned 16. I made him wait to tell her till she could figure it out for herself. Then, behold, they ran into each other, and here we are 4 years later. If Kyle had mated someone else, they would also be considered a beta female, but things lined up in this case.

The ladies all fled the room, looking uncomfortable. "I'm just frustrated," I admitted as the door slammed shut behind them. I didn't pay attention to them as none would be my Luna. Pinching the bridge of my nose, I closed my eyes to try to stop an upcoming headache. I headed to my chair, planting myself. I wanted to slam my head against the wooden desk out of irritation.

"You'll find them, dude," he tried assuring me, his hands in his pockets, always relaxed no matter what. Kyle was one of the few I accepted informal speech and actions from because we were best friends; I could trust that man with my life.

"Any word on how patrol is going tonight?" I asked, desperate to escape the conversation of another failed attempt to find my person.

His face stiffened; his posture changed, and I could feel a negative outcome. "We have word on a rogue wolf going through one of the smaller towns to the east." I rose from my chair, rounding to lean against my desk.

Rogue wolves were rare. The idiot was probably looking for trouble, as the Majority of them did. Most wolves thrive by having a community to take pride in; those that weren't part of packs were unpredictable, so they were treated as threats immediately. I hated their kind; they killed my parents and were a nuisance to my people. Brushing back my hair, my hands folded on the smooth surface of the desk.

"If you don't let go of your desk, we will have to buy you another one, and I don't think you want to explain to your future partner why you have a budget for desks," Kyle laughed, stretching his back and cracking his neck, "We will catch him, rogues haven't gotten the best of us before."

I lightened my grip on my desk so I didn't crack it; I must have grabbed the edge in anger at the unwelcome news. Desks came and went around here, more so over the years as I'd had severe outrages. "Get Tyler, Miles, and Josh to look for them. Bring it back dead or alive, I don't care," I ordered, swinging my chair around to look out the window. Selene gave me leadership skills when I accepted the position, but I thanked the gods that my pack listened and lived peacefully together. This is another environment my parents raised me in, and the one I almost destroyed before I got better for my pack.

Kyle nodded, and without hesitation, he left me alone. I sighed, the window staring me in the face as I looked over the beautiful flowers surrounding the headstone with both my parents' names on it, swirling around to my desk once again, then opening the plain black folder, which held our forms and various other information. Plucking out a form, I reached under the desk to open a drawer that held my laptop so that I could have two copies. Either we would kill this one or go another way, such as if they are useful to me, but

either way would require paperwork.

.

.

An hour passed, and the report was staring me in the face. I was ready to get this over with. We'd seen little to no outsider wolves in the territory since I was a kid. The rogues had an uprising around that time, so this time, there was going to be no mercy. I had started drawing a bit on a notebook page, which is one of my hobbies. I didn't do it very often, but when waiting, it seems to help my anxiety about things, so I don't overthink. My mind wandered to the thought of my mate, the one person that I was meant to be with. It was unfortunate that touch was the only way to know who your mate was.

Long ago, we could smell who we were fated to be with from the start, but Selene, our goddess, quickly took that away because of jealous fights and killings. Not to mention people finding their person too early; the goddess probably deemed that a bad idea and took away the smell. It made it harder to find them, but a 12-year-old didn't need to be finding their mate anyway.

My thoughts drifted to what my soul mate looked like; I tried to picture her, but failed. They always say your mate is your dream girl, but I've never been able to put a finger on what my dream girl was; perhaps I was too busy preparing to rule my people. I smiled to myself, remembering when I met her, I'll have someone to help me rule.

We would be like two sides of a coin, equals, and rule together side by side, each with a different view. That's how my parents described it. In order to have her, though, I'd have to mark her neck or wrist with my canines. My only example is my parents, who died of a rogue attack when the uprising happened. When I do find her, I worry because I have never been good with women, nor have I ever been out on a proper date.

Both of them had an ongoing love for one another; I remember thinking they were gross for hugging and kissing, but now I envy that. They also loved their children to death; my heart sped at the buried feelings of grief I had. I missed them with all my heart, just as Beth did; my mind wandered to the time Beth brought home a

raccoon.
*
*
"Beth, put that down!" My father screamed, chasing the tiny red-headed girl, trying to hold onto what looked to be a raccoon, trying to scratch and bite at her, but she didn't care, only running as fast as she could through the living room.

"What the heck!" I huffed as Beth ran straight into me.

The raccoon shot from Beth's arms, and my dad opened the door, letting it out. "Beth, wild animals are not pets, hun," he sternly said. His military cut went well with his strong jaw; he looked scary, but he was so family-oriented.

"She still ran into me," I fumble, straightening my loose jeans and T-shirt covered in turtles.

My father walked over to me after gently kicking the door closed; he crouched down, smiling at me. "Beth, get over here," he ordered, and small orange curls came into view, looking knowingly that she was in trouble; he grabbed her lightly, setting her beside me, and looked at us. "First, are we allowed to have wild pets?" He asked. We both shook our heads, no, and he smiled. "No wild pets. Beth now apologize to your brother for smacking into him."

"Sorry, Marcus," she squeaked.

"It's ok, I guess," I smiled.

"Hug," my dad ordered, rising from his crouched position. We quickly threw our arms around each other and followed my dad into the kitchen. After we ate dinner, my mother and father watched a movie with us.
*
*
I sighed, bringing me back into reality. Still waiting for it, which drove me mad, so I pulled out my phone. It felt like my warriors were taking a while, but it could be that I had made the paperwork a bit too fast. I was sure we were just going to kill him.

What's your location? I texted Tyler.

We are close to getting her Tyler responded...A female rogue was something else, as a rogue wasn't common to begin with.

What is taking so long? I asked, frustrated; I could tell my wolf spirit was getting restless, and he was not a very calm one. I blamed him for some of my anger, but not all of it.

She can fight, sir, better than we anticipated. A female who can fight? I thought as I reviewed the form in front of me. Of course, females can fight, but someone who wasn't part of a pack system was unheard of, as packs offered training to all.

Interesting.

My beast was agitated, and because of this outsider roaming my land. Still, I wondered what a female who didn't belong to a community was up to.

*

*

*

After a while, a small female was essentially thrown into my office. My nerves were on fire for some reason, but the only thing I could think of was that I hadn't seen a loose wolf in ages. She took a step back, looking frightened, which only angered me as this was probably a facade to lower my guard. "My beta wolves guard that door," I stated, knowing that she would probably try to run. I didn't bother looking up as I'd like to make this as swift as possible, but a wave of silence unnerved me as I looked up into blue eyes and a small female, frail-looking with long black hair and full lips. She was thin, like she didn't eat often, looking breakable.

"Speak, what are you doing on my land?" I growled. Her mouth shot open, but no words came out. "Do you disrespect me by not responding? Do you think that makes you brave?! Plus, you're stealing from my pack. I could kill you just for that." My father always taught me that people should answer the first in charge, and silence was disrespectful.

My hands fidgeted on the desk, balling into fists. I got up from my

desk, the anger inside of me making my beast rise forward, "I'm human, and I stole because I'm poor," she rambled, looking nervous.

Very opposite of what I was used to. Roaming individuals were always cocky and self-assured.

I knew it was a lie. All these people ever did was lie. "See, I'm not buying that. I've never seen you anywhere in our pack or neighboring packs." Without realizing it, I got out of my seat, getting closer to her. "Now tell me why you're here!"

"I-i. It was a mistake," I rambled.

"Your kind are mistakes," I growled. My body kept going toward hers, herding her, almost trapping her further into the room. As I moved forward, she seemed to push back, heading backward toward the wall. My eyes never left hers. "Now, why are you here?" I asked sternly, hovering around her to keep her from running. It was easy to stalk her as she was short.

Her body began to tremble, and my sympathy rose for her. However, this just made me angrier, as these beings didn't deserve my sympathy. "I needed food, and I came here."

"You have resources, which is why I'm not buying that," I scoffed as we stared at each other. Most places had shelters and food banks, but she didn't seem to use them.

"What would you like me to say?" she whispered. It was another thing that made me angry: Rogues couldn't put their ego aside and do what was right.

"The truth," I snarled.

She looked as if she wasn't conveying any emotion on her face, just a few minutes of a blank stare, and I flipped. Like a strike of lightning, the events unfolded in front of me as my anger and trauma became me. In an instant, I had her up against the wall with my hand wrapped tightly around her arm.

I was unprepared for the lightning strikes rumbling across my skin. My heart sped as my beast rose, and everything began to change. I

stared into her eyes, and I could already imagine my whole life with her.

Realizing my mistake, I yanked my hand back, and the woman hit the ground, sinking to her knees, wrapping her arms around them. I was stunned, looking down at her; then her smell crept in, floral but robust; my beast was rising to the surface, and I had to tame him down. I didn't want to scare her any more than I already had.

Rocking back and forth, obviously frightened, I couldn't blame her.

She was beautiful, and all I could ever have hoped for. It pained me to know that I had caused her such harm the first time we met; I'd make this up to her...sevenfold. Stroking her arm, she put her head in her knees.

Standing, I grabbed my phone from my pocket and made a call. "Kyle, come with Harry immediately," I rambled, not giving him a moment to speak, not knowing if I had broken her arm as I'd heard humans were fragile. Lowering myself to look her over. Trying to roll her sleeve up, she smacked my hand, making me angry once again, but I breathed in, "Let me look." She froze as I rolled it up, uncovering a forming handprint-sized bruise.

"Yes, sir," Kyle yipped, hanging up. I put my phone back in my pocket, wiping my mouth with my hand, and within minutes, both Harry and Kyle were coming through the door. Harry was carrying his bag with his tools. I left her sleeve rolled up, but couldn't help but notice the scarring on her shoulder; it angered me as I couldn't imagine someone doing this to someone so sensitive.

Kyle locked eyes with me, concern crossing his face. "She's my mate, our luna, and uhm, I accidentally bruised her arm," I explained, ashamed of myself for letting my anger get the best of me; it is something I have been dealing with since the death of my parents, though this was not an excuse.

Harry moved forward. "I need to get close to her to examine her. May I do so?" he asked, and I nodded. Harry was the son of my mother's close friend; once he studied medicine, I gave him the job as my pack doctor when his dad retired. Harry was only 25, four

years older than me; he had brown hair, a slender nose, and wide eyes like an owl. He ducked to the girl's small frame on the floor, and she flung her head up, eyes wide, scooting back, probably scared for dear life.

Harry was slow, crouching down to her. "I won't hurt you; it's OK." He whispered, sparking jealousy that I had to control.

Because of you, my instinct spat in my head; I liked to think if he had a name, it would be Sam.

She squirmed away from Harry again. Once she hit the wall behind her, she went to hit him. Taking a giant step, I caught her arm. "There will be none of that; let him examine you now." I could already tell the sparks I got from touching her would become addictive.

"OK," she squeaked, taking her hand from my grasp to my dismay.

"Sir, you may want to wait by your desk. You might be scaring her," Harry suggested.

I growled at the thought of her being scared of me, but I listened, trusting Him, who was also a close friend and right in this situation. Walking over to the desk, I kept my eye on her. Her beauty met no end; her slender face complemented her big blue eyes, her lips were full, and her hair was as black as the color of oil, all the way down to what looked to be halfway down her back. Her body looked thin and weak, but I couldn't remember the last time I'd seen a human; I had been around my kind practically my whole life. I wanted to get her story as soon as possible and see if she could trust me after this.

I sighed, running my hand through my hair.

I fought my wolf back from jumping forward. His spirit was strong, and this made me want to lose control, driven by deep anger... And now lust. I hadn't lost control like that in months, and I thought my rage was dying down. Harry tested the tenderness of her arm; a bruise was already forming. Kyle looked over at me. His hazel eyes met mine. I knew he was curious, but he didn't want to be rude by asking in front of everyone.

"Sir?" Harry asked, interrupting my thoughts.

"How is she?" I asked, not needing to wait any longer.

"She is just fine, but will have a bruise on her arm until it heals. It isn't broken," Harry continued. "Use ice to help it clear up faster; if you need anything else, don't hesitate to reach out. May I assist you with anything further?" he asked, looking my mate over again. Holding in a growl of jealousy, I remembered he was ensuring she was OK, but I didn't like anyone looking at my mate.

"Thank you, and stay here for a little longer," I said, trying to help her feel more comfortable. He nodded, helping her to her feet.

yours, the instinct called as I looked at how beautiful she was.

Another female might help her calm down, I realized, so I whipped out my phone and dialed Beth. "Hello?" she wondered.

"Beth, will you come here? I found her," I said, and she hung up. Not even a few minutes later, she busted in.

"She's your mate?" she questioned, her curly red hair bouncing against her face in a frenzy. "Looks like I have a friend to make," she stated, almost to herself in a mumble. My mate moved to the side, seemingly trying to get away, but knocked herself against the wall once again, trying to get up with the help of the wall behind her. "What. Is. On. Her. Arm. Marcus?!" Beth bent down to try to get a closer look. The small female flinched quickly, rolling back down her sleeve, a frown covering her face.

I sighed. I knew I had to tell her eventually, so I rushed out. "I grabbed her arm before I realized she was mine."

Beth looked stunned but kept her eye on the girl, who was trembling on her feet. "Why would you do this, Marcus, to any female? Mom and Dad would-"

Cutting her off, my hand went to the edge of my desk, cracking it slightly; my only reminder to stay calm was Alex's breathing. "Be disappointed, I know. Nothing new"

Her head whipped toward me. "No, that's not what I meant, and you know that. Be better is all I'll say," she stated.

"I will," I smiled, with Beth now grinning ear to ear.

"It's crazy that she fought to get up here," Beth mumbled almost to herself.

Looking from Alex to Beth, I asked, "Fought?" Alex was just a human, no match for them.

"We had to wrestle her down to get her up here," Kyle coughed.

"You touched her?!" I growled, my anger rising. My mate wrestled both of my betas. Turning my attention to Alex, I looked at her petite frame and how frail she was, yet she fought.

"Alpha, you're scaring her. We are sorry, we didn't know," Kyle said. He was right. he wouldn't do anything; he was too in love with Beth.

I didn't realize I was growling, but I coughed to try to cover it. "Beth, I appreciate you, and Kyle, I apologize," I said, trying to be polite so my mate wouldn't be afraid.

"It's OK, man," Kyle smiled.

Nodding, I turned to the girl. "What is your name, sweetheart?" I asked.
She seemed paralyzed in fear but swallowed, croaking "Alex" in a hoarse voice. I knew she was scared when she said it, her voice trembling.

"Alex," I repeated. Her name is Alex, and it is so beautiful.

Beth approached her, gently swinging her arm around Alex's shoulders. "Are you hungry?"

Alex said nothing, only staring back at Beth.

"Guys, can I talk to her alone for a second, please?" I asked, dying to apologize.

"Yes," Beth yipped.

"And Harry, you're dismissed," I smiled. He nodded, getting a head start.

"Yes, sir," Kyle said, and Beth and Harry followed him out. The door shut. And Alex's hands flew to hug herself, wincing as her hand touched the spot I grabbed. She looked to be recalling what had just happened.

Her eyes remained wide as they had been since the incident. Alex took a couple of steps back, looking fearful. It broke my heart that I had done so much harm before anything had started. "Hey, I'm sorry for what happened. We do not like Rogues in our pack. And I acted accordingly, but I am sorry for how we met." I wasn't very good at apologizing, but I would at least try for her.

She said nothing, standing like a statue, but seeing my track record, I waited in painful silence for about two minutes. She said nothing, looking away.

"I hope we have a positive future. I wish only to spoil you, Alex." I stated as I could hear how fast her heartbeat was going. Mine instinct breathed. When Alex said nothing again, I was desperate to latch onto anything. Examining her frail frame, an idea came to mind. "Let's go get some food," I said, not giving her the option to let her fear rule. I knew that if I gave her a choice, there would be no progress.

She nodded, and swiftly, I made my way to the door, keeping Alex behind me as a tactic just in case she tried to run. Once we landed in our split kitchen and living room, I gestured to the barstools up against the island, looking into the kitchen from the living room. "Take a seat here, and I'll make you something to eat," I stated; she again nodded, not responding as she hopped up onto one of the stools. It didn't seem very easy for her size, as she was a bit short.

My nerves spiked as footsteps sounded, and I turned swiftly to deal with whoever it was. But Beth's face came into view, "Beth!" I growled lowly so Alex wouldn't hear me.

"Chill. I can see the hairs on the back of your neck standing up. It's just me," Beth laughed.

Letting out a breath of relief, I turned around to look at Alex, who had rested her head on her folded arms. "You come in so aggressively every time. One of these days, I'm not gonna know if you're an intruder or not," I teased Beth.

"Well, then you would have to put some of those taekwondo lessons to use." She laughed. A memory came to mind of when my dad got both of us taekwondo lessons, but neither of us was interested. A wide smile crossed her face. "May I join you, Alex?" She asked. I loved my sister, but I knew once I found my person, she would be up our butt.

"Sure," Alex mumbled.

Beth's smile grew wider as she hopped on the barstool right next to Alex." She then turned to me. "So what are we making?" she asked as I walked around and into our kitchen.

Alex's blue eyes never left me, as if I were a threat, but I didn't blame her. "I don't know, Alex, what would you like?"

She shrugged her shoulders, biting her lip.

"How about a poached egg?" I asked.

She nodded, and Beth raised an eyebrow at me. I knew what she was thinking: that I didn't know how to cook.

How hard could it be?

I turned to the stove and began cooking as Beth tried to talk to Alex, but after a few minutes, I didn't hear either of them respond.

Once I was done, I turned around. Alex still had her arms crossed and her head down, but she looked completely asleep. Beth was scrolling on her phone. When she noticed that I had turned around with a plate, she looked from me to the egg. "She seems to have fallen asleep. Also, your egg is black. Where did you learn how to make poached eggs?" she asked.

"Nowhere, honestly, I was winging it," I laughed.

She snickered. "Good to have you back, bro," she stated. I knew exactly what she meant. I had been a little cold in recent years. "I'll put her in bed in the spare room."

I couldn't ask for a better beta female or sister.

Note

Thank you for all the patience.

So I will be wrapping this book up around the first of the year. there is a second book planned, I just have to make sure they are perfect. but thank you so very much everyone! ❤

If you notice the view count is lower for my book because I got rid of the chapters that were from the original (they were bad) so we down to what just the first chapter made ❤

New beginnings and love 💕